

**Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Upon Arrival From Greenville, Delaware
May 30, 2022**

Gun Control

Q. Good morning, Mr. President. Do you feel more motivated to get action on guns?

The President. Well, I've been pretty motivated all along. You know, the folks who were victimized there, and their families, they spent 3 hours and 40 minutes with me. And they waited all that time, and some came 2 hours early.

And—but the pain is palpable. And I think a lot of it is unnecessary.

So I'm going to continue to push, and we'll see how this works.

U.S. Military Aid to Ukraine

Q. Are you going to send long-range rocket systems to Ukraine?

The President. We're not going to send to Ukraine rocket systems that can strike into Russia.

Gun Control/Prior Restrictions on Assault Weapons

Q. Sir, do you think there is anything different in how Republicans will approach the gun reform question now, given the circumstances?

The President. Since I haven't spoken to them, I don't know. But my guess is, if they have—if they—yes, I think they're going to have to take a hard look.

Q. Is there one element—is it age, is it red flag, is it some component that you think could be most successful now?

The President. Well, that's hard to say because I have not been negotiating with any of the Republicans yet. And I deliberately did not engage in a debate about that with any Republican in that—when we were down consoling the families in Texas. So I don't know what is the most—how far it goes.

I know that it makes no sense to be able to purchase something that can fire up to 300 rounds. I know it makes—and I know what happened when we had rational action before, back in—when the—[inaudible]—which was the law that I got passed. It did significantly cut down mass murders. And so there's only one reason for something that can fire, you know, 100 shots.

I mean—and I'll just conclude with this: Look, when I first started doing hearings on the issue of what rational gun laws should be, it was during this period when I was a Senator and the death rate was going up. Not that many more people were being shot, but the death rate was up. And when I think of—I'm not sure, I think it was—[inaudible]—hospital in New York—whatever the largest trauma hospital is.

And I sat with a trauma doc, and I asked him—I said: "What's the difference? Why are so many people"—and not that many more people were being shot. This is now 20 years ago or 25 years. I said, "Why are they dying?" And they showed me a x-ray. He said, "A .22-caliber bullet will lodge in the lung, and we can probably get it out, may be able to get it, and save the life. A 9-millimeter bullet blows the lung out of the body."

So the idea of these high-caliber weapons is of—there's simply no rational basis for it in terms of thinking about self-protection, hunting. I mean, I just—and remember, the Constitution,

the Second Amendment was never absolute. You couldn't buy a cannon when the Second Amendment was passed. You couldn't go out and purchase a lot of weapons.

And those who—not many are saying it anymore, but there was a while there where people were saying that, you know, the tree of liberty is watered with the blood of patriots and what we have to do is, you have to be able to take on the Government when they're wrong. Well, to do that, you need an F-15, you know? Or you need an Abrams tank.

I mean—so it's just—as I say, I think things—I think things have gotten so bad that everybody is getting more rational about it. At least that's my hope and prayer.

I've got Gold Star moms in there, so I've got to go in.

The President's Executive Authority/Gun Control

Q. Sir, I know you want Congress to act, but do you believe that as President you have a particular responsibility now?

The President. Oh, I know I have it, but I—but there's a Constitution. I can't dictate this stuff. I can do the things that I've done. And any executive action I can take, I'll continue to take. But I can't outlaw a weapon. I can't, you know, change the background checks. I can't do that.

And you know, my whole career, I've been doing it.

Q. And persuasion?

The President. Persuasion, yes. But you know, there's been a few things happening. I know you've noticed it. You've had to travel with me. [Laughter]

Republican Stance on Gun Control

Q. But McConnell has ordered a directive to Senator Cornyn to search for a compromise. Do you really think there's something there? Or are they just making noise?

The President. Look, I don't know, but I think there's a realization on the part of rational Republicans—and I think Senator McConnell is a rational Republican; I think Cornyn is as well. I think there's a recognition in their part that they—we can't continue like this. We can't do this.

I've got to go in. I've got the Gold Star parents. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Cornyn, John, III; McConnell, A. Mitchell.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Military families; Civil rights : Firearm rights; Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Congress : Senate :: Minority leader; Law enforcement and crime : Gun control; Law enforcement and crime : Gun violence, prevention efforts; Russia : Ukraine, airstrikes and invasion; Texas : Uvalde :: Shooting; Ukraine : Russian airstrikes and invasion.

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